

Police Service of Northern Ireland

HQ Ref: TRIM 365474

PD 14/08

POLICY DIRECTIVE

CALL GRADING POLICY

1. POLICY IDENTIFICATION

POLICY TITLE: Call Grading Policy

POLICY OWNERSHIP:

**DEPARTMENT
BRANCH**

Operational Support Department
Information & Communications Services
(ICS)

POLICY APPROVED BY: ACC, Operational Support Department

**CCF REF/OTHER
DATE OF APPROVAL**

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2. POLICY STATEMENT

- (1) The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is committed to the protection of life and property, preserving order, preventing the commission of crime and where offences have been committed, bringing offenders to justice.
- (2) In pursuit of these commitments, the PSNI will deal with every request for police assistance in a manner that will ensure the maintenance of public confidence, community safety and provide reassurance to the community.
- (3) This Policy will maximise the potential to gather evidence and make the best possible use of all available resources.

3. INTRODUCTION

(1) Executive Summary

- (a) This Policy introduces a new system of grading calls from members of the public and creates new definitions for existing call grades.
- (b) All contacts with the police will be termed as either an emergency contact or a non-emergency contact.
- (c) Non-emergency contacts are further subdivided into three levels of response, namely:
 - (i) Priority;
 - (ii) Scheduled;
 - (iii) Resolution without deployment.
- (d) A contact will be defined as an emergency or non-emergency as a result of the information available to the operator and not by the means of access to the operator (ie 999 or non-emergency line). It will only qualify as an emergency if the relevant criteria are satisfied.

(2) Origin

- (a) The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) have introduced a set of National Call Handling Standards with the aim of standardising call handling across all United Kingdom (UK) police services.
- (b) Nationally recognised call grades and definitions are required to support consistency and comparability between services.

(3) Aims/Objectives

- (a) To provide a consistent methodology for the classification and prioritisation of response calls received by PSNI;
- (b) To assist PSNI in managing the demands of public expectation;
- (c) To assist PSNI to make the most effective use of available resources;
- (d) To provide a common method of data collection, enabling comparison between UK police services.

(4) Application

(a) EMERGENCY

- (i) An emergency contact encompasses circumstances where an incident is reported to police which is taking place and in which there is, or is likely to be:
 - (aa) Danger to life;
 - (bb) Use, or immediate threat of use of violence;
 - (cc) Serious injury to a person and; or
 - (dd) Serious damage to property.
- (ii) For the purpose of this Policy 'serious' means that the contact handler can objectively determine the contact as serious.
- (iii) Where the contact relates to an allegation of criminal conduct, it will be dealt with as an emergency if:
 - (aa) The crime is, or is likely to be serious and is in progress;
 - (bb) An offender has been disturbed at the scene;
 - (cc) An offender has been detained and poses, or is likely to pose a risk to other people.
- (iv) Where the contact relates to a traffic collision, it will be dealt with as an emergency if:
 - (aa) It involves or is likely to involve serious personal injury;
 - (bb) The road is blocked or there is a dangerous or excessive build up of traffic, thus posing an increased risk of further traffic collisions and further risk of serious personal injury.
- (v) Where the above circumstances do not apply, a contact will still be classified as an emergency if:
 - (aa) The circumstances are such that the police contact handler has strong and objective reasons for believing that the incident should be classified as an emergency;
 - (bb) An emergency contact will require an immediate response.

(b) NON-EMERGENCY

- (i) A contact will be classified, as non-emergency if the criteria listed above is not met. This will mean that the police response may not be immediate and may encompass a range of solutions, some of which will not involve the attendance of police resources.
- (ii) A non-emergency attracts three levels of initial response:
 - (aa) Priority;
 - (bb) Scheduled;
 - (cc) Resolution without deployment.

(c) PRIORITY RESPONSE

In this case the police contact handler acknowledges that there is a degree of importance or urgency associated with the initial police action, but an emergency response is not required. These typically arise in circumstances where:

- (i) There is a genuine concern for somebody's safety;
- (ii) A witness or other evidence is likely to be lost;
- (iii) At a traffic collision involving injuries or a serious obstruction;
- (iv) A person involved is suffering extreme distress or is otherwise deemed to be extremely vulnerable;
- (v) District Commanders may, as a result of identifying local trends or issues, decide that specified additional calls should receive a priority response. This should be the subject of local instructions;
- (vi) Hate Crime.

(d) SCHEDULED RESPONSE

Under these circumstances it is accepted that the needs of the caller can be met through scheduling because:

- (i) The response time is not critical in apprehending offenders;
- (ii) The matter is service orientated and a better quality of initial action can be taken if dealt with by a pre-arranged response by a police officer or other appropriate resource, or by attendance at a police station, clinic or surgery.

(e) RESOLUTION WITHOUT DEPLOYMENT

The needs of the caller have been met through telephone advice or information, the involvement of another and more appropriate agency or service, or through some other method.

Response to Alarms

The PSNI Policy in respect of responding to alarms is set out in Policy Directive 01/06 – Police Response to Security Systems.

- (i) LEVEL 1 activations will be treated as an emergency contact;
- (ii) LEVEL 3 activations will attract an initial response of 'resolution without deployment' the keyholder for the premises will attend and request further police assistance if required.

(5) Legal Basis

- (a) Whilst there are no legislative requirements for PSNI to adopt this Policy, it is considered appropriate for PSNI to embrace the National Call Handling standards as produced by ACPO.
- (b) This should be seen as a method of ensuring the delivery of legislative requirements contained within Section 32 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000:

It shall be the duty of police officers:

- (i) To protect life and property;
- (ii) To preserve order;
- (iii) To prevent the commission of offences;
- (iv) Where an offence has been committed, to take measures to bring the offender to justice.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY

(1) Best Value/Continuous Improvement/Efficiency

- (a) This Policy will standardise the police response to reports from the public and will assist in managing the demand for police resources by creating a method of classification that permits incidents to be properly prioritised.
- (b) At the same time full cognisance is taken of the need to manage public expectation and satisfaction whilst providing a professional service in the most efficient, economic and effective manner.
- (c) This will provide an accurate means for the recording of the data required for performance management within the organisation, for example targets set by the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB).

(2) Training

- (a) Training will be required to ensure that all police both operational and those performing duty in communications centres are aware of the implications of these changes.
- (b) This training is suitable for delivery by district trainers within the existing cycle.
- (c) ICT Training Unit will reinforce this Policy on all subsequent Command and Control training courses.

(3) Risks

- (a) This Policy seeks to bring PSNI Call Grading in line with National Call Handling Standards, as produced by ACPO.
- (b) The publication of this Policy combined with a proactive media strategy is linked to greater transparency and presents the Service with an opportunity to explain the rationale associated with call handling.
- (c) It is the responsibility of District Operations Managers and Chief Inspector, Belfast Regional Control (BRC) to ensure that this Policy is being complied with and that regular audits are conducted.

(4) Bureaucracy

This Policy replaces Service Procedure No 71/02 entitled 'Call Grading Policy'. It is not envisaged that this Policy Directive will place any additional bureaucracy on those involved in front line policing.

(5) Consultation

The following have been consulted during the preparation of this Policy:

- (a) Chief Officers;
- (b) District Commanders;
- (c) Chief Inspector, BRC;
- (d) Operational Communications Officers;
- (e) ICS;
- (f) Professional Standards Department;
- (g) ICT Training;
- (h) Crime Prevention;
- (i) Legal Services
- (j) Equality and Diversity Unit;
- (k) Freedom of Information Unit.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS/EQUALITY/INTEGRITY/FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

- (1) This Policy Directive is deemed to be Human Rights compliant. It has been screened for Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988 and meets the organisation's integrity standards.
- (2) Sections 1-6 are suitable for public disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

6. REVIEW

- (1) Superintendent, Business Liaison, ICS is responsible for the review of this Policy on an annual basis.
- (2) Feedback or enquiries in respect of this Policy should be forwarded to Superintendent, ICS, Operational Support Department at PSNI Lisnasharragh, 42 Montgomery Road, Belfast BT6 9LD.